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ITALIAN DECORATED CEILINGS.

IN selecting any one feature of architectural detail for study it is necessary to consider it in two distinct ways, or from two entirely different points of view; first in its relation to the design as a whole, then as a separate portion of design in itself. To be sure, these two considerations can not be wholly separated, and both need to be constantly kept in mind, but the detail can not be satisfactory unless both are given due weight.

Taking small detached portions of detail, as we have in the choice of our illustrations, the first of these considerations can not be shown in all its bearings, and it is the second to which attention will naturally be directed in comparing the eight ceiling designs in this number. The relations of scale, relief, line, and color, as they effect or are effected by the rest of the room, can not be seen in these plates. However, the consideration of the design in its narrower relations to itself can be fairly well shown in these fragments, and this is of sufficient importance to make them of value for study.

The eight examples all belong, with one exception, to the Cinquecento or sixteenth century work of Italy, and this one example is so closely related to it as its immediate prototype or suggestion, that it is quite appropriate to consider it with the rest.

In the early part of the sixteenth century *Morto da Feltro*, a young Roman painter, was led in his studies to investigate the remains then to be found of the wall decorations of the earlier Roman times. He made the most careful and minute copies of all remaining in and near Rome, and visited all of the Italian cities where such remains were known to exist. Among the ruins which he investigated were the tombs on the *Via Latina*, in the *Campagna*, outside the walls of Rome, which have fortunately been preserved until now, owing to the fact that they were not situated in a neighborhood where building has been done in recent years, and also that the brick and stucco of which they were composed was of no value to remove.

Although not the first to excavate and study this ancient work *Morto da Feltro* was the most talented of the early sixteenth century painters to devote himself especially to reproducing the Roman arabesques and grotesques in the decorations of the period and probably played a more important part in this particular revival than any other one man. *Raphael*, *Giulio Romano*, the *Lombardi*, *Bramante*, and *Michael Angelo*, all went for inspiration to the Roman work of the first centuries of the Christian era, and applied themselves to extricate it from its long entombment. It is no wonder that it started suddenly into new life



XLII.

Ceiling in the Corte Peale, Mantua.

and grew even into a more splendid development than it had ever known, perhaps, in its most gorgeous Roman period.

The principal monuments of the Cinquecento in painting are the Loggias of the Vatican, the Villa Madama, and the Ducal Palaces at Mantua; the churches of Venice and Verona, and Brescia afford the best examples of sculpture.

The arabesques of Raphael, or as they were originally called grotesques, from being chiefly discovered in grottoes, are said to have been directly suggested by some ancient remains discovered in the Baths of Titus. They appear to have given a great impetus to this style of decoration, for they are the first of their kind on an extensive scale. The Villa Madama and the Ducal Palaces at Mantua display designs of equal variety of effect, with a greater unity of character in details. They are by Giovanni da Udine and Guilo Romano, the same artists who executed those of the Vatican Loggias; but in these later works many of the licenses in the Vatican arabesques have been in great measure avoided. They are of a more unmixt classical character; the scrolls are particularly fine. Perhaps the most prominent feature in the designs of this period is the grotesque—often carried to the point of absurdity in mechanical disproportions and impossibilities and violations of the most palpable laws of gravity. The designer, like the poet, has his license with regard to possibilities or probabilities. A mere natural improbability, where natural imitation is in no degree essential, is the privilege of fancy, but the extremely grotesque shocks the æsthetic sensibilities and cannot be otherwise than offensive. There need be no limit to our chimeras, for nature is not their test; but if we combine monsters in our scrolls, or place animals upon the tendrils of plants, we should at least proportion them in size to the strength of the tendrils upon which they are placed. This is not observed in many of the Vatican arabesques, and is occasionally disregarded also in the later works

of Mantua; yet these are, in other respects, the standard types of Cinquecento arabesques, as developed in painting. It was this fault of painful disproportion which Pliny and Vitruvius found with the arabesques of Pompeii, which display anomalies not so much as approached by even the worst specimens of modern times.

In the Cinquecento arabesque curves the scroll is always completed; it is a determinate figure, and its elegance or lightness will depend upon the relative proportions of the stem. With scrolls are combined all other motives of classical art, with unlimited choice of natural and conventional imitations from the entire animal and vegetable kingdoms, both arbitrarily composed and combined. Another feature is its beautiful variations of ancient standard ornaments, as the anthemion, especially, of which there are some admirable Cinquecento examples. The guilloche, the fret, and the acanthus scroll are likewise favorites, and occur in many varieties. The Cinquecento appears to be the special province of the curve in its infinite play of arabesque; but in all its developments it is in the form of some natural object, or artificial combination. The cartouches and strap-work wholly disappear from the best examples. In all the extensive works of the north of Italy, from about 1480 to 1550, such forms are extremely rare. Vases, implements, and instruments of all kinds are prominent elements. The admirable combination and play of color is a chief feature in the work of this period; and it is worthy of note that orange, green, and purple perform the chief parts in the colored arabesques.

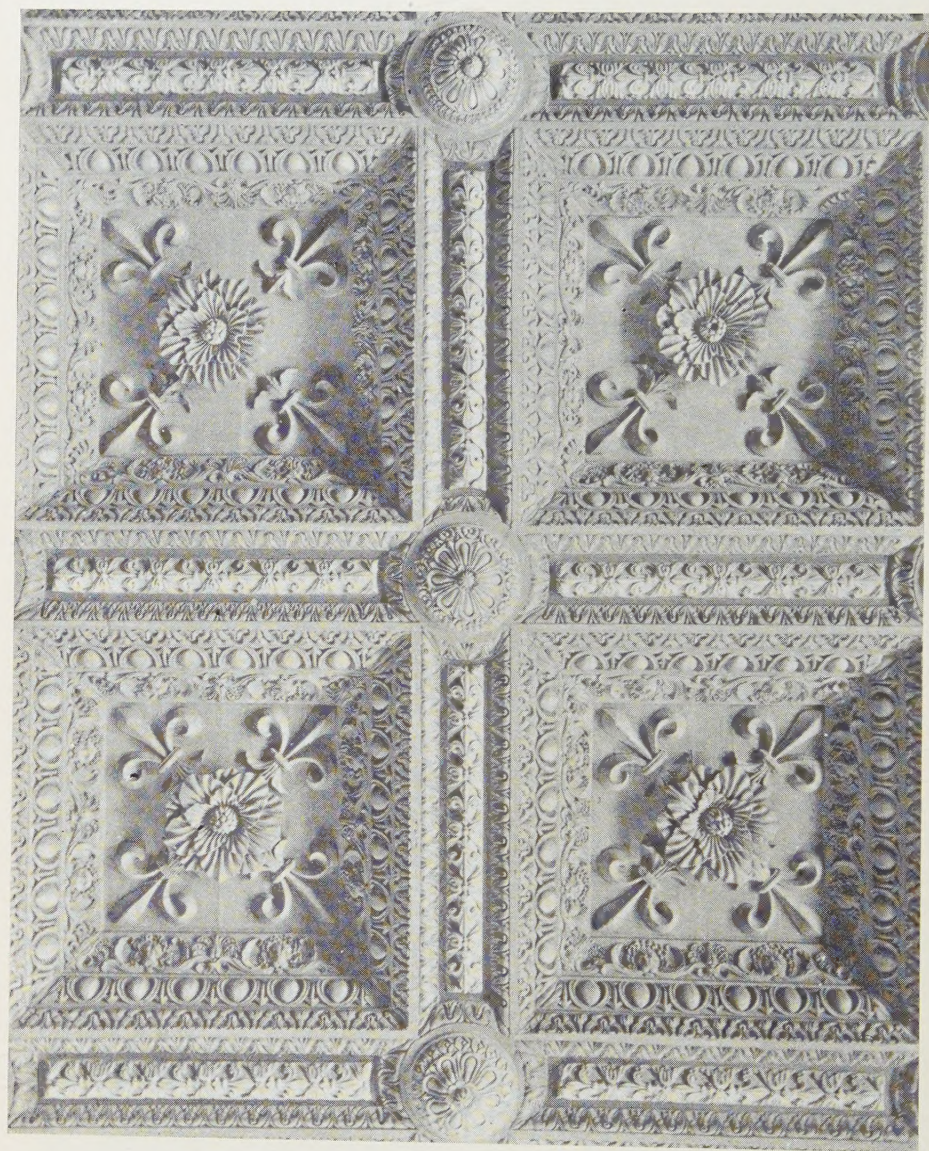
XLi.

CEILING IN THE CORTE REALE, MANTUA.

XLii.

CEILING IN THE CORTE REALE, MANTUA.

The Corte Reale, or Ducal Palace of Mantua, is an extensive mass of buildings of various dates and styles, begun in 1302 under Guido Buonacolsi, one of the earliest lords of Mantua, and continued and extended by successive lords and dukes up to the middle of the sixteenth century.



XLIII.

Ceiling in the Hall of the Two Hundred, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence.

It covers an immense extent of ground, and comprises hundreds of rooms, galleries, church, garden and piazzas. The great apartments were sumptuously decorated in the sixteenth century, principally by Giulio Romano and Primaticcio. The walls, for the most part, have broad pilasters with composite capitals and rich cornices, very elaborately ornamented with arabesques in relief, picked out with gold and color; the ceilings generally of wood, are vaulted and panelled, and painted with figure subjects; the doors richly carved and gilded. The palace was for three centuries the home of the Gonzagas, whose name is closely associated with the rise and fall of this once brilliant and powerful city.

The room in which the two ceilings shown in plates xxxiii and xxxiv are found was part of the suite of apartments of Isabella d'Este, an enthusiastic patron of the arts, to whom a great part of the decoration of the palace is due. It measures twenty feet six inches by ten feet eight inches, and is fourteen feet three inches high. The walls have a dado five feet seven inches high, above which are panels containing painted figure pictures, with a frieze and cornice at the top.

The colors of the room throughout are an intense, heavy blue, and gold. The ceiling, which is of carved wood, is four panels wide and nine long with gold largely predominating. The circular panels have a blue ground with gold ornament, the octagons are all gold, the ground of the small squares is blue with gold rosettes, and the small circles or bosses are gold with blue ornament. All else is gold. In the frieze gold ornament is used on a blue ground, and the consoles in the cornice are treated in the same way. The architrave is of solid gold.

Plate xxxiv shows the ceiling of a small window-niche, or alcove, and is only about three feet and a half long. The color treatment is the same as the larger ceiling.

XLIII.

CEILING IN THE HALL OF THE TWO HUNDRED,
PALAZZO VECCHIO, FLORENCE.

The Palazzo Vecchio needs no

special description. The ceiling of the Hall of the Two Hundred was executed in the fifteenth century, under the direction of Michelozzi, by the brothers Tasso.

XLIV.

CEILING OF A TOMB ON THE VIA LATINA, ROME.

The Tomba dei Valerii, situated on the Via Latina, is reached by going down a double flight of steps, and consists of an oblong chamber about fifteen feet long. Its vaulted roof is covered with well preserved stucco relief, in square and circular compartments, representing nymphs riding on winged and sea monsters, nereids and genii. On the vault over the entrance door is represented a female figure on the back of a winged fish, and on the opposite vault the hours are dancing.

XLV.

CEILING IN ROME.

XLVI.

PORTION OF CEILING IN THE ACCADEMIA DI BELLE
ARTI, VENICE.

This is a portion of the ceiling of the Prima Sala and dates from the fifteenth century. Its color is blue and gold.

XLVII.

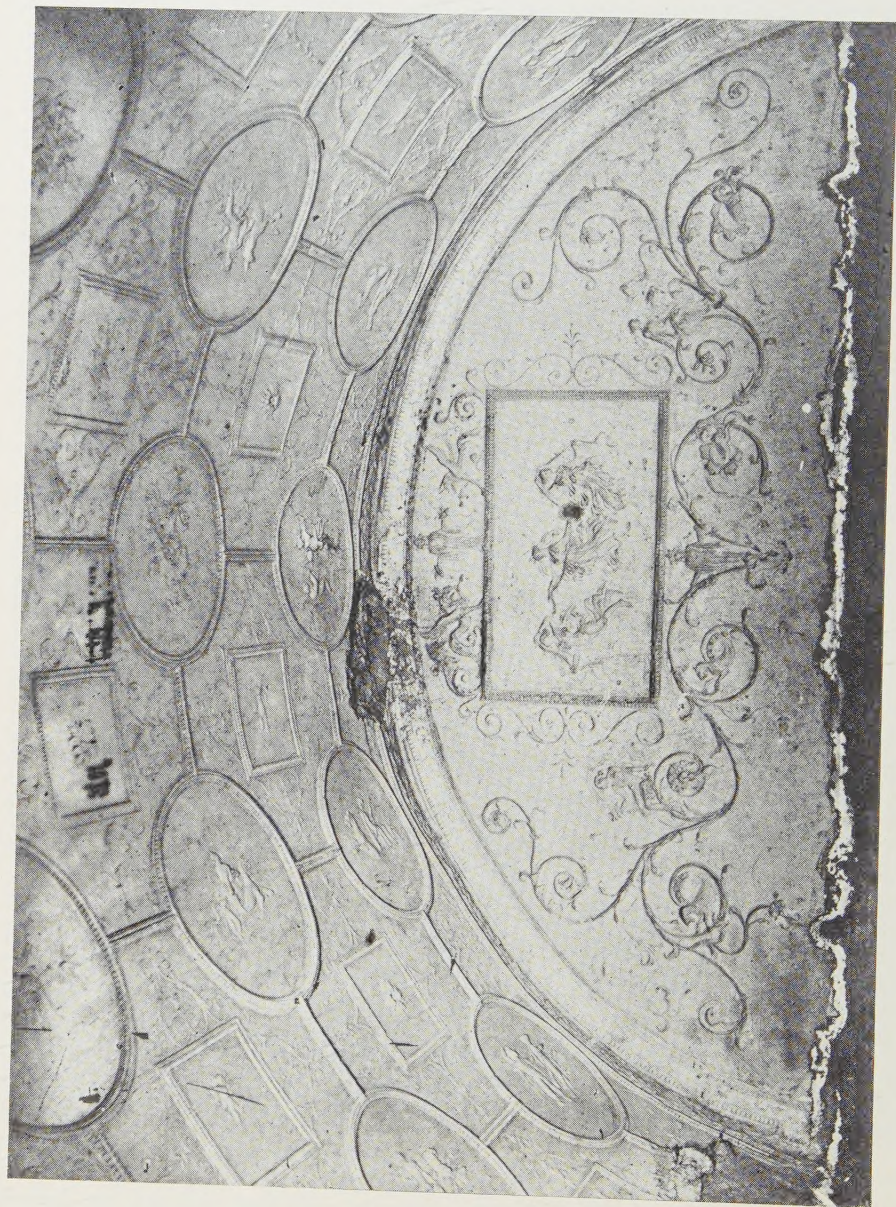
CEILING OF THE SALA REGIA, VATICAN, ROME.

The ceiling of this apartment is a barrel vault, decorated in stucco by Pierino del Vaga and Daniele da Volterra. It was built by the architect, Antonio da Sangallo, as a hall of audience for ambassadors.

XLVIII.

CEILING IN THE VILLA MADAMA, ROME.

The Villa Madama consists of a casino of moderate size, raised on a high basement, of which the principal feature is a lofty open loggia of three round arches, faced with an order of Ionic pilasters, which is continued around the building. This loggia, which opens from the extremity of an elevated bridge-like terrace, is vaulted, and its walls and ceilings are famous for their decorations by Giulio Romano and Giovanni da Udine. The villa was built by Giulio Romano from designs by Raphael, and the ceiling shown is one of Romano's works.



XLIV.

Ceiling of a Tomb on the Via Latina, Rome.

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The history of Architectural Clubs throughout the country is much the same story wherever one may turn. It is but the record of the efforts of the nucleus formed by a few enthusiasts who have recognized the benefits of organization and concerted work, and who have interested to a greater or less degree and for a longer or shorter period other workers in the same field. In all cases it has been a succession of ups and downs, the downs usually outnumbering the ups. The work has fallen on the shoulders of the few devoted enthusiasts, and their efforts, although for the time bearing good fruit, have more often than not been thankless and unappreciated.

Of the many similar examples St. Louis furnishes a good instance of the way in which Architectural Clubs come and go.

After several earlier experiments, in the fall of 1894 a club was formed as the outcome of an architects' baseball nine; as one of its members writes, it was a child of much promise, but its methods were free and easy, and in the spring of 1895, for lack of discipline, it had already begun to go into decline. At this time a reorganization was effected, new life put into the work, and a new constitution adopted.

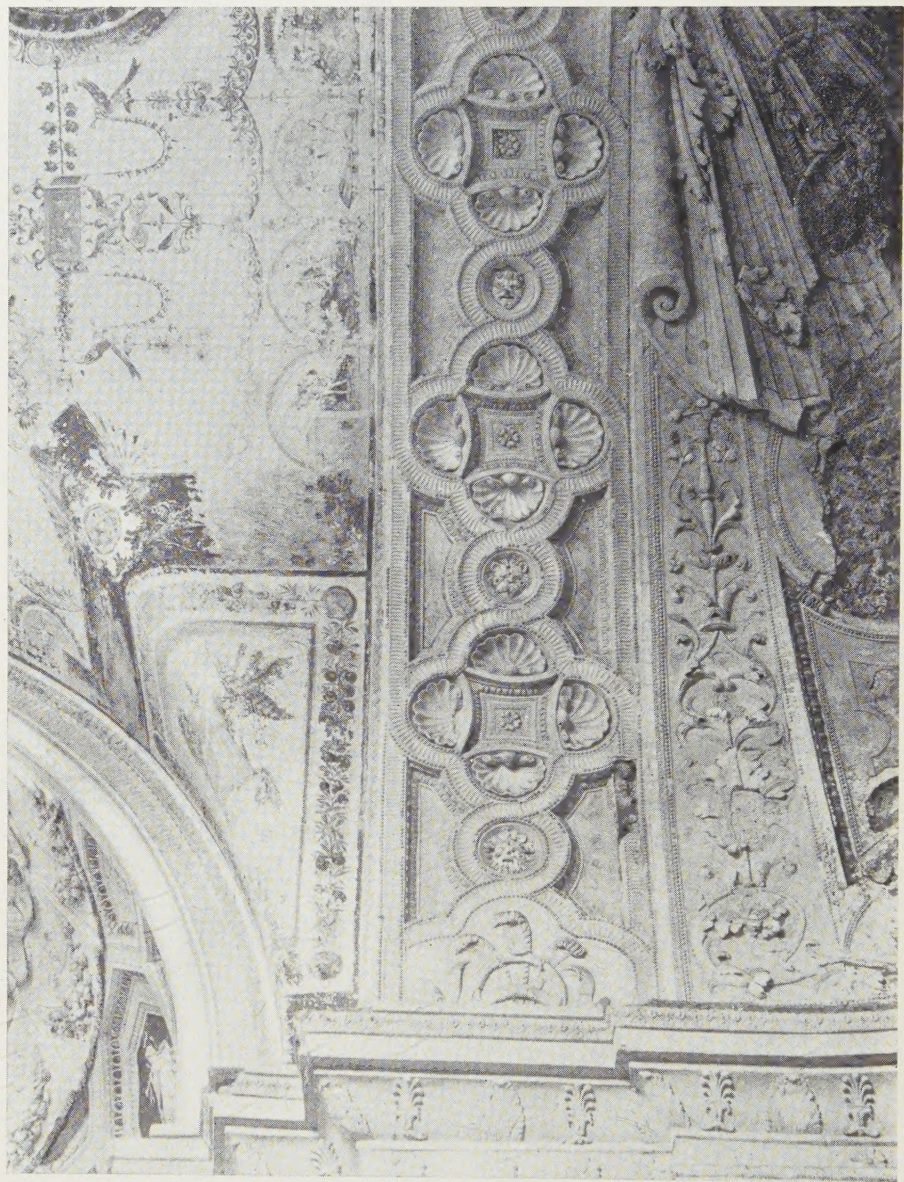
The scheme of work laid out was, in the main, that followed by most other clubs, and consisted of competitions, classes in design, modelling, pen and ink, and water color.

The spirit of companionship, and the desire to exchange views on questions of common interest, forms an important part in the *raison d'être* of any such organization. The social side of the work can not be overlooked, and in this case has been a most important factor in its success. It has been made the rule with the St. Louis Club to devote one evening a month entirely to social enjoyment, and the large attendance at the social meetings has proved the wisdom of this course.

Neglect of the social instinct is not a common failing with young architects, and almost without exception the various organizations of draughtsmen and architects owe their success to the judicious mingling of work and play. Where the play has been left out the work has invariably suffered. The architect or draughtsman who is a "grind" very seldom proves successful.

In this connection it may be instructive to refer to the history of a certain well-meant experiment in architectural education which, in the beginning, promised to be an unqualified success, but which has through failure to appreciate the well worn motto that "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," gone the way of its many predecessors and fallen into decline.

It was started with the sanction and financial support of the Boston Society of Architects and Boston Architectural Club, and its immediate conduct placed in the hands of two young architects who have not only devoted a great deal of time and work to make it a success, but have enlisted the interest of others who have done the same. Unfortunately, however, the work was so arranged that it had few attractions for the brighter men. The rooms were bare and dreary, and no attempt made to lighten the tedium of drawing alphabets, mouldings and the orders. It is hardly necessary to say that under such conditions the interest lagged. Young men employed all day in the drudgery of an archi-



XLV.
Ceiling in Rome.

tect's office—and it is drudgery that is usually given to the younger men—can not be expected to go on week after week for two or three hours an evening with drudgery which differs only slightly from their daily work. Some relaxation is necessary, and if the work is properly arranged and conducted it need not be feared that occasional opportunities for relaxation will interfere with it.

Although the spirit of play need not be carried far enough to detract from the seriousness of the work or to suggest triviality in any way, there seems no reason why architectural study can not easily and safely be made attractive and a pleasurable experience rather than drudgery.

It is to be regretted that with so many favoring conditions this undertaking could not have been more sympathetically conducted, for with proper management much good could be expected from it.

An Omission.

By some oversight the name of the J. F. Pease Furnace Co. was left off the two color design advertising Economy Heaters on the back cover of our last issue. We call attention to this, as there may be some of our readers who might not connect the name of the makers with the name of their heaters, but there can be very few who have had experience in architectural work who do not know well and favorably either the J. F. Pease Furnace Co., as old and tried manufacturers, or the Economy Heaters as an appropriately named line of apparatus.

Books.

Specifications A Practical System for Writing Specifications for Buildings
By W. Frank Bower, N. Y., 1896.
231 pp. \$5.00.

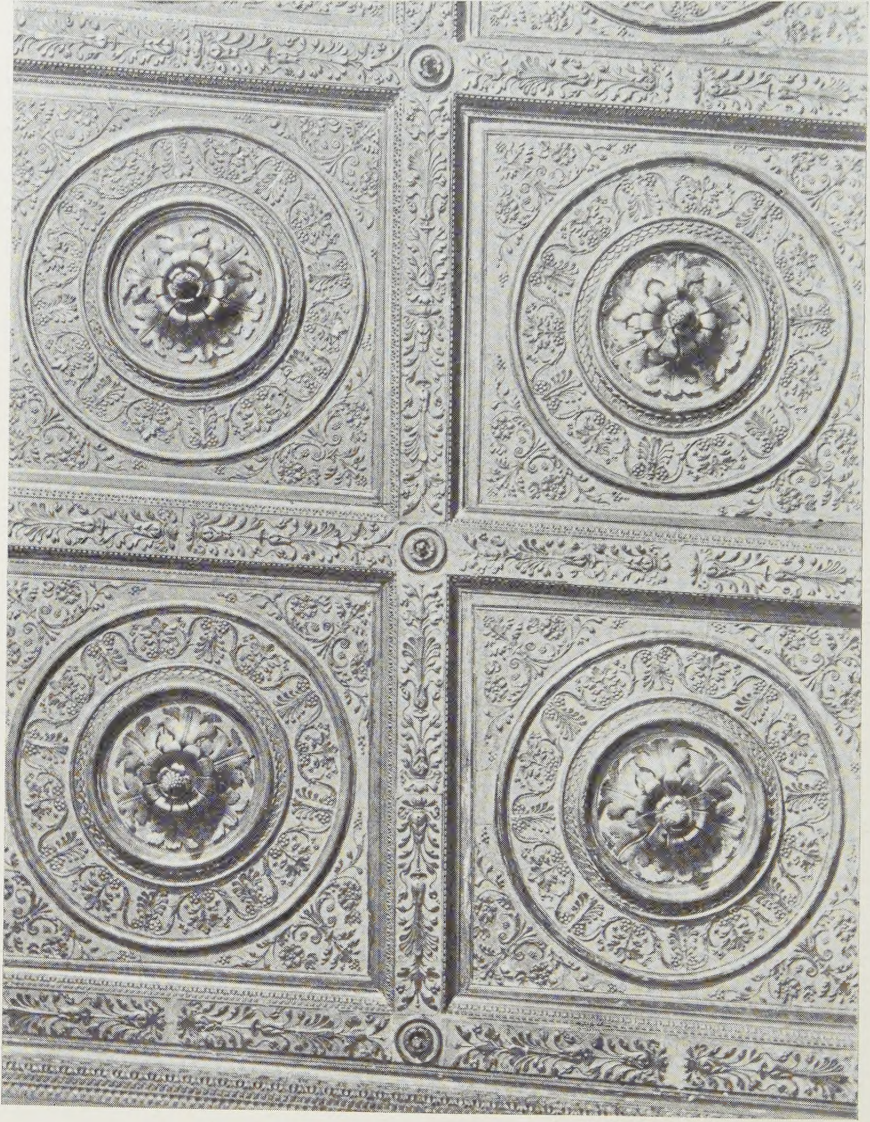
This work is a practical hand-book, being primarily intended for handy reference, and will be found of service mainly in the way of jogging an archi-

itect's memory as to points that might otherwise escape his attention in writing specifications. All of the common methods of construction are taken up successively, and specifications given according to the best practice. A skeleton list is also given which can be used as a reminder in order that nothing may be omitted from a specification. The right hand pages are also left blank for the insertion of manuscript notes. That a young architect without experience for a guide can write a satisfactory specification from this book is not to be expected. It will nevertheless be frequently found useful in any office.

Hints to Draughtsmen.

In a recent number of *The American Architect* Mr. C. H. Blackall makes some suggestions to architects on "Self-Helps" which are excellent and timely, and if followed would surely result in more satisfactory buildings as well as more peace of mind among architects themselves. These remarks are addressed to architects who have passed the experiences of the student and draughtsman and are engaged in work of their own, but the younger men who have not reached this stage of advancement can with profit "stick a pin in them" and reserve them for future application. Some of the suggestions, however, apply to young and old alike. The following extracts furnish food for reflection. There is nothing novel in the ideas, but constant insistence upon old truths is necessary for progress in any walk of life.

"The first aid which naturally suggests itself is constant and varied use of the perceptive faculties in making drawings, sketches, water colors, etc. An architect has to think through his pencil and pen, and if the thoughts are clogged, if the ideas stick at the point, though the result may be satisfactory, there is a loss by friction, and he who expresses his ideas readily on paper has a tremendous advantage over the one who may have, perhaps,



XLVI.

Portion of Ceiling in the Accademia di Belle Arti Venice.

more brilliant conceptions, but is less able to make them of tangible value. But there is no royal road to good draughtsmanship, and it is not wholly a gift. It requires constant practice to even keep what one has, and though I would not set draughtsmanship at the head of self-helps, nor claim that the capacity of an architect is measured by the beauty of his drawings or the facility of his hand, constant sketching is a necessary adjunct of continuous growth. In the cares of professional life it is very easy to drop the habits one may have acquired as a student, and to feel that there is nothing about the office, and little in our relatively uninteresting streets which can inspire us with the pictorial enthusiasm which possessed us in Europe. Quarter-scale and full-size details of actual work are less interesting, but they seem more necessary, and it requires a good deal of dogged determination for one to regularly devote a portion of each day to making some sort of sketch or drawing. And yet the habit of daily sketching is one which none can afford to neglect. Draw from photographs, make pastels, water-colors, or, even better, occasionally draw from life; but there must be some kind of persistent, oft-repeated use of the imitative faculties in this line, or they will relapse into the rusty condition which the younger men are inclined to designate as peculiarly the quality of their elders.

"Then the earnest seeker for growth must study the beautiful in all its manifestations, for beauty is a fundamental necessity of good architecture. I do not mean merely the beauty which finds expression in stone and brick, and iron and brass, but also the beauty which lingers round the setting sun, which paints the lily or adorns the rose, which gives its subtle charm to Rosetti's poems, or crowns with glory the canvas of Chavannes. The subtle, æsthetic sense which makes life enjoyable, the beauty of form, of face, of thought and action, all reflect directly upon the beauty of architecture, and the man who is keenly alive to the one is most apt to bring out the other in his work.

"And still in the line of studying the beautiful, we cannot afford to neglect the exhibitions of paintings and drawings which every year are becoming more frequent among us. We cannot miss one of them without loss. It is not such a very far call from Simons or Monet to quarter-scale drawings, though the connection is often missed and the correlation of ideas not appreciated. An honest attempt in any department of art can be studied to advantage until it awaken a responsive echo in the architect, and thereby his horizon is enlarged, his appreciation intensified, and his own art the better understood.

"Architecture is so essentially imaginative in its highest expressions that a great deal of help can come from a course of imaginative reading. We are too prone to be matter-of-fact even at our best. The irksome requirements of actual practice tend so often to crush out the dreamier qualities which go with every flight of the imagination, that in the rush of business we may forget the satisfaction and the real growth that might come to us by at times following the intellectual revelry of a work such as the "Arabian Nights," "The Ancient Mariner," Prescott's "Conquest of Mexico," or Rudyard Kipling's "Jungle Stories." Indeed, I know of no better literary antidote for architectural affectation than to travel with Mowgli through the romantic imagery of the jungle, letting our fancies run their own pace in a world which is new to us, leaving us with a clearer vision, and a truer perception for the practical, tangible art with which we have to grapple. If I were obliged to choose between fiction and Viollet-le-Duc as a course of reading for an architect, my reason might carry me to the latter, but I firmly believe more growth would come in the long run from a little literary dissipation than from scientific indigestion.

"Now all the foregoing means of self-improvement are quite as available for the draughtsman as for the architect, but there are some ways in which the architect is peculiarly able to profit by other people's experiences and ideas, and to help himself into a



more fitting condition. I believe that every architect should set out, as a rule, first and always to build to suit himself and to have the courage of his own convictions; to resolutely determine to give his clients not what they think they want, but what they really ought to have; to study each problem which comes before him as if it were his own, as if its solution rested with him alone, and never allow himself to put out a piece of work of any description with which he is not perfectly satisfied. This may seem an impossible rule of conduct; exigencies do arise which oblige one to temporize; architecture is very often a series of compromises; and yet I firmly believe that the growth of the architect is quite closely in proportion to his independence of thought and to the extent to which he succeeds in doing nothing but his best. One of our foremost architects makes it a rule never to let a drawing go out of his office until the copy thereof, which has been made for office reference, is, at least, as good as the original. This means a constant struggle, but it also means that the standard is kept up, and the work of this particular architect amply repays the pains he takes with his drawings. A client wants something done in a hurry; we are human enough in many cases to give him what he wants, when our manifest duty to ourselves and to our profession is to resolutely refuse to be rushed or bullied into doing anything but what we believe to be our best. This is a point which personal experience will fully endorse, and from hardly any other source can there come so much real tangible growth to the individual."

Mr. Blackall goes on to show the necessity of forming habits of self-criticism, of comparing ones own work with that of others, and connected thinking. He says: "Even the most clever of our designers would benefit by setting aside a certain time each day which would be entirely their own, to think and plan their work, to ponder on what might be done, and to weigh and measure the results of past attempts." In this connection

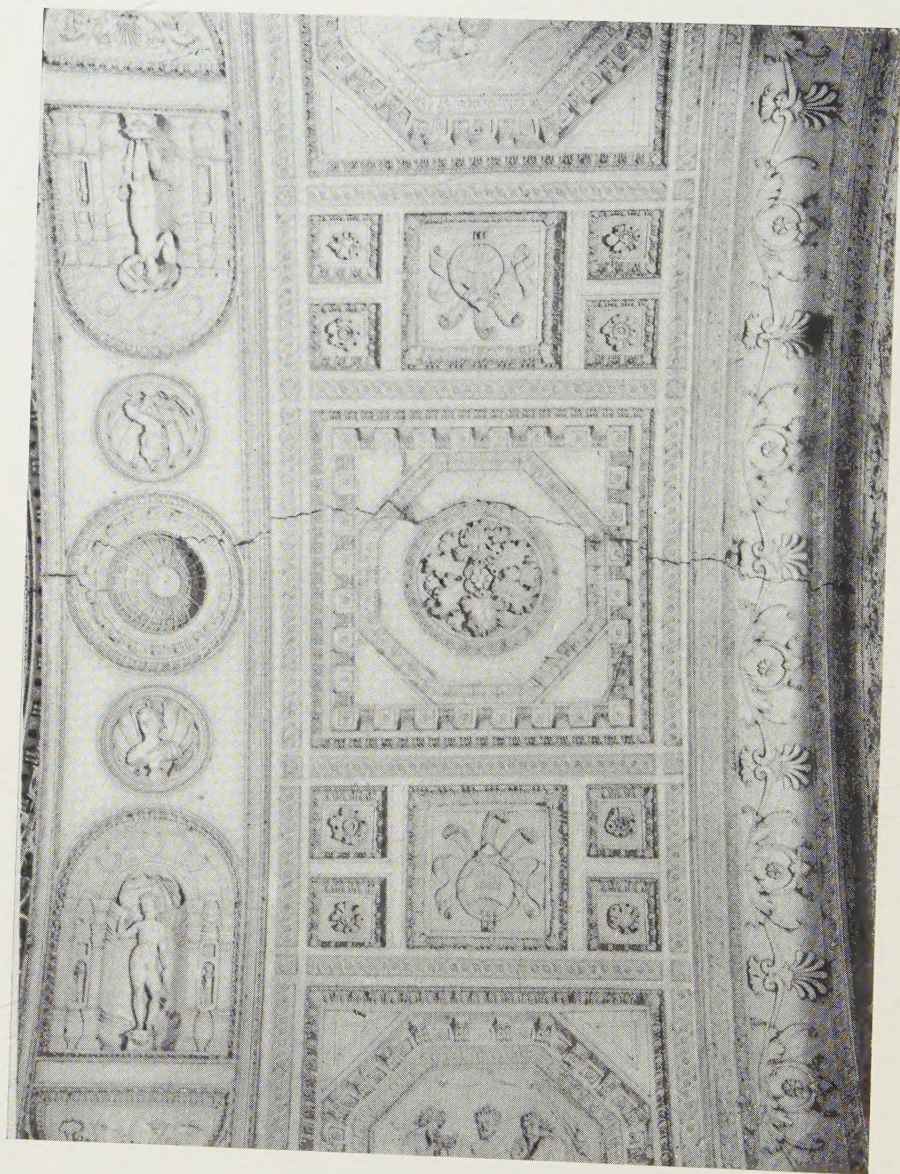
he recalls the advice given by an English architect to an American (doubtless himself) who was on his way to study architecture in Europe, to the effect that the student need not concern himself with the number of sketches he made, nor with the number of drawings he elaborated, nor the number of miles covered in journeys, but that he had better pick out some thoroughly good building, wherever he got a chance, sit down carefully before it and study it until he felt its whole being, and appreciated the why and the wherefore of all that he saw, until the secrets of the structure were his, and then he could write back to his friends in America that he had not done much sketching, but he had done a powerful lot of thinking.

Binding for Volume One



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XLVIII.

Ceiling in the Villa Madama, Rome.



XLIX.

La Maison Dieu, Saint-Lô, Normandy.